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DESIGNING ORNAMENT.

DESIGN in connection with execution is that alone which can be termed decorative; the carrying out of design discloses the subtle connection between industry and art. The designer necessarily has to take into account the means available to give effect to his conceptions, which should involve the elements of the ideal and the practical. The pattern designer of upholstery stuffs, for instance, must select his colors, not as the painter on canvas, but with reference to mordants which will fix the color to the material, whether vegetable fibre, like cotton, or animal, like silk and wool. The designer in wrought metal work has to take into account the treatment of the metal in carrying out the design, as to whether in a corona style of chandelier, the ring is to be molded or made in pieces, or cut or stamped, and a design in repoussé work, in brass or iron, will be modified according as enamel or gilding is to be applied to protect or to finish the material.

A knowledge of mechanical processes is in many instances an important aid. Without directing these processes the designer takes them into account. This is true, also, of several of the sciences, as that of the laws of light in reference to producing effects in relief with surfaces plain and spherical; so, too, with the modification of color by the reflection, refraction, or absorption of light in transparent, semi-transparent, and opaque substances, for the scenic effect has ordinarily much to do with ornament. In short, in securing it, especially in interior decoration of dwellings, care has to be taken if the object is to render it prominent and attractive, as distinct from a subdued and unobtrusive character, that the limits of appropriateness are not overstepped in the desire to produce—through brilliant coloring or bold forms—striking effects and violent contrasts.

Whilst in some of the arts there are absolute principles of judgment, there are, probably, no points in connection with decoration on which all are agreed; but this very circumstance stimulates novelty and diversity, and the very errors made, through over-looking sound principles of design, serve as warnings.

Nature abounds with suggestions for design, but principles of design are violated in carving or glass decoration, by a mere copy of leaves and a style of ornament that simply preserves their most prominent and beautiful characteristics. If leaf and plant carving or stained representations of leaves and plants are to be dignified, those features must be presented which suggest the idea of strength and vitality; the stems should be thicker than their natural proportions, the curves should be simplified, and the foliage represented as just bursting from the bud; to prevent an appearance of weakness in the stems they may be increased even beyond their natural proportions at their lower length.

We have an illustration of carving before us, in which the veins and edges are all rounded, the leaflets slightly hollowed out, but not so much as to break up the grand curve of the leaf or to spoil the gradation of light and shade.

The effect of fashion on ornament in countless articles of utility, or intended solely for decorative purposes, has to be recognized by manufacturers. In jewelry the taste will now be for Byzantine and Etruscan styles, and again for the most outré forms and every species of oddity, even to the dangling of a wheelbarrow at a watch chain.

In case of knick-knacks ornamental art succumbs, though only temporarily in a thousand instances to fashion; but such departures, as in hanging round walls white china herrings, with blue ribbons round their necks, and mouths wide open for flowers, are to be regarded as eccentricities. Two *sweet things* in table lamps is Jack and the Bean Stalk in carved wood, and a grimacing monkey upholding a globe.

External influences, the sources of which are sometimes discernible, sometimes obscure, operate on design. In the changes wrought, severe grandeur in decoration of interiors has given place to exquisite beauty, then to mere prettinesses, and finally to a profusion of unmeaning and carelessly wrought detail.

The designs for furniture at times have partaken of prevailing architectural styles, followed by extraordinary blendings of ornament in periods of transition. At one time the Greek type was a model, characterized by simplicity and almost baldness of effect, with details carefully studied. At another the Franco-Italian school, with superabundance of flowing ornament without meaning, but still producing a rich effect, then the Louis XIV. school, with types that could be molded to every purpose, its attraction being its elegance and beauty.

The high stilted Gothic had its day, and the pretentious, cumbrous and labored Elizabethan. At present, the Eclectic school may be said to reign, giving full play to the designer, and throwing him very much on his own resources, under the condition that the effects shall be unique and pleasing.

What with new materials, the progress of the arts, the experience gained from what has been already accomplished, and the suggestiveness which springs from intuitive feelings and studious thought, an ever widening horizon opens out before the true designer in ornament, who stamps individual expression on his work, an expression which has value whether the material be coarse or fine.

Good design is not to portray laboriously every detail of the object represented; details which will be feeble in effect as directly challenging comparison. Art alone can endow delineations with life-like vigor. The highest branch of design is, undoubtedly, that which has reference to surroundings, as where a group of general ornament has to be treated, the elaboration and enrichments must be considered, not merely individually, but with reference to the whole design, in which case there must be a dominant or central feature, so treated as to emphasize the main idea. One branch of ornamental designs concerns the introduction of affinities between different structural parts, whether as to size, color, or form, so as to secure symmetry.

It is only of late years that the idea seems to have laid hold of decorative designers that this does not involve mere repetition, a result due to

"Desegna, Antonio—*desegna, e non perd' tempo*," expressing the paramount importance attached by the painter as well as architect to drawing well as a safeguard against mannerism, the tendency to repeat commonplace forms, and the best security for originality of design.

The beauty of contour in oriental pottery moulds, of beauty of contour and right proportion, is due to the readiness with which the hand follows the eye. As to color, no theory which serves it out in definite fixed proportions can realize natural effects; the triumph of the designer in decoration lying in the mode in which it is toned, broken up, and softened.

The tendency of the day is to more vivid coloring, an evidence of increased freedom from arbitrary limitation. Success in treatment of such coloring largely depends upon genius. The old mosaicists of Palermo, Ravenna, and Rome, the painters of Assisi and Mantua, Raphael, wall coloring of suites of apartments in the Vatican; Titian and Veronese, whose "best doing," Ruskin declares, "was on the outside of the common brick and plaster walls of Venice," the designers of the glorious glass of medieval times, who worked for the wonder of succeeding ages, unknowing of the rules that have guided modern practice, and unacquainted with the prism, used the vividest of colors in the most prodigal of ways and almost always well. Ornamental design is to be advanced by elevating the standard, and to this end we are constantly laboring.

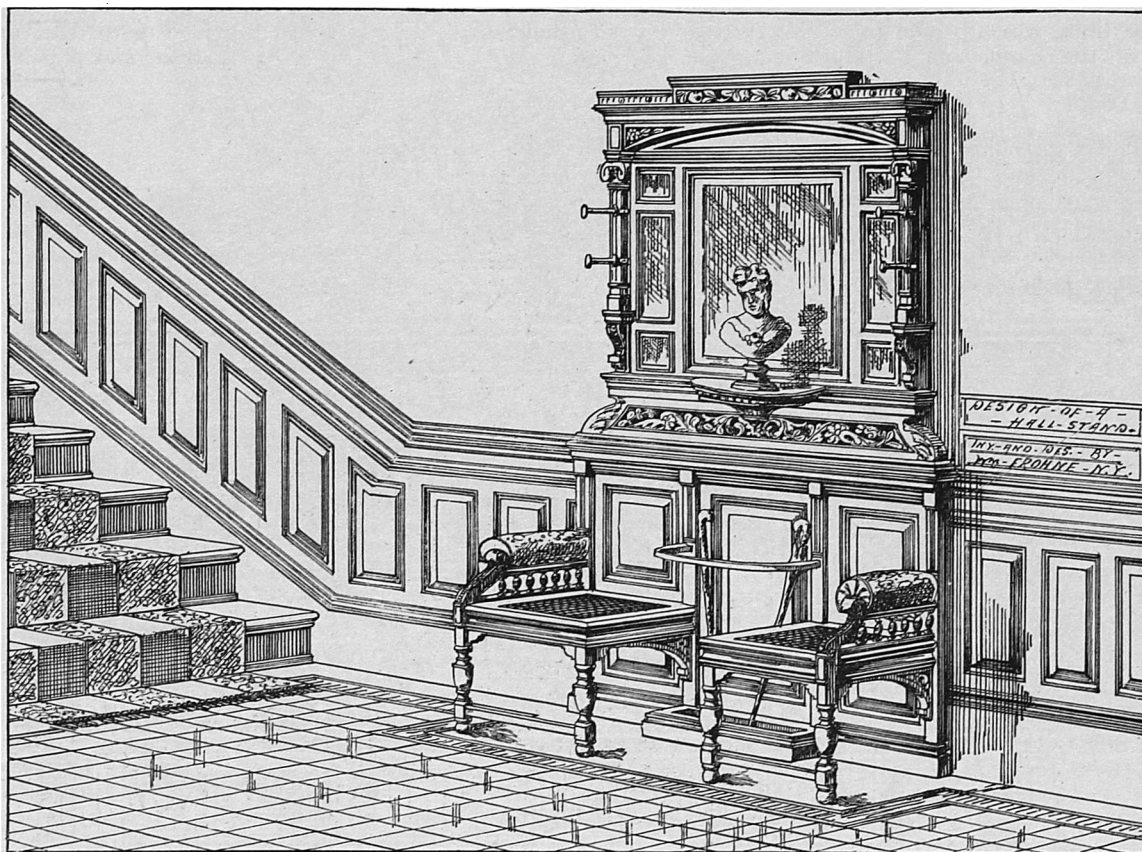
THE fashion of filling up rooms with antique objects, representing given periods of art, has much to recommend it. In addition to the intrinsic and artistic value of the articles and the scenic effects induced, there is the unfailing charm of historic associations conjectural or fanciful. The progress of wealth and taste is marked by increased private acquisitions of antique objects, and Americans have achieved the credit of being among the most liberal of buyers. When modern art has accomplished all that it is capable of realizing with suggestions supplied from the labors of the past, and from meeting the special demands that spring from new requirements in the way of decoration, there will surely be nothing more worth living for, and "the last man" may appropriately sink to rest on a couch carved by a Cellini and low relief in silver work by a Fabriano, with stained medieval windows designed for their color, not their subject, letting in the

light on walls adorned with the tapestries in silk and gold of an Ambrogio Borgagnone, on vases of silver gilt repoussé chiseled over, mantel pieces curiously carved, glazed figures in relief of a Lucca of Robbia, here and there a lustre bowl of Arab Sicilian design, chairs upholstered with textures showing the freedom and elegance of old Florentine design or the luxuriance of the Venetian types.

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there is no servile copying. They set ingenuity to work to devise means to utilize them not only for decoration but actual service.

PAPER VARNISH, for paper hangings and similar purposes, is made with four pounds of damar to one gallon of turpentine. The damar dissolves very readily in the turpentine, either with moderate agitation or a very gentle heat. Sometimes white or bleached resin is used instead of the damar, or the two ingredients are combined.



DESIGN FOR HALL STAND. BY WILLIAM FROHNE.

the disclosure of one principle of Japanese designs, which embodies the feature of avoiding the exact repetition or counterpart of lines, or, if these structurally exist, destroying, as far as decoration will accomplish it, exact division or representation of any object.

In Japanese carving and painting, while a group of objects in the foreground will fill up one side of the surface, this will be balanced by a larger group on the other, which, owing to distance, fills smaller space.

Our advice to amateur designers is that which Michael Angelo gave to his favorite pupil—